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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [PINR](#) [BL](#)
SUBJECT: BOLIVIA'S "EDUCATIONAL REVOLUTION"

Classified By: Acting EcoPol Chief Brian Quigley for reasons 1.4 b,d

¶1. (C) Summary: In a surprise appointment on November 7, President Morales replaced former Education and Culture Minister Magdalena Cajias with Roberto AGUILAR Gomez, former rector of the state-university Mayor San Andres and former vice-president of the constitution-drafting Constituent Assembly. Cajias was viewed as an able administrator, but non-political, and the addition of Aguilar to the cabinet will likely further politicize the cabinet, as he is a ardent Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) supporter and fiery speaker in defense of the draft constitution. Aguilar was appointed despite the animosity between President Morales and Aguilar's brother Anibal Aguilar, who as the first vice-minister of alternative development had repeated confrontations with then-cocalero-leader Evo Morales. The appointment of Roberto Aguilar to the education ministry may mean that the current stalled education reform bill will gain a new lease on life. Even if the bill remains on the back burner, an analysis of the draft education reform bill provides interesting insight into the "educational revolution" that Aguilar stated is "undeniable" and "the cement over which the democratic and cultural revolution should be constructed and consolidated." End summary.

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A is for Evo, B is for Bolivia, C is for Comrade...
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¶2. (C) In a country facing so many other issues, it can be difficult to focus public attention on education reform. Even so, eyebrows raised in Bolivia recently when it became known that one of the questions on the practice test for future teachers was "The government of only a few, and the abuse by those few used to the detriment of the people and to benefit a cabal can be represented with a single word: a) oligarchy, b) dictatorship, c) despotism, d) tyranny." ('All of the above' was not an option.) The study guide for future teachers also included as recommended reading Vice President Garcia Linera's 2003 "The Popular Indigenist Rebellion", with the suggestion that the students pay particular attention to Garcia Linera's proposals for revolution. Although the new education reform bill has not passed congress, a review of it

provides insight into the leftist intellectual wing of the ruling Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party and its goals for the "revolution."

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We Do Need An Education
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¶3. (C) The ruling MAS party's draft constitution offers broad rights to universal free education (including university) which will be difficult for the government to fund. Earlier fears of the Catholic church that private education would be outlawed seem to have been allayed by a modification to the draft constitution's text, which now specifically states that private universities will be recognized and that religious organizations may administer such universities (article 87 includes a requirement that the universities be "open to all" and "non-profit".) Currently students in Bolivia are required to attend classes until eighth grade (a requirement rarely enforced in rural areas, where often students who wish to continue their education past elementary school must move to larger communities and dorm there during the week.) The stalled education reform proposal would have required that students stay in school to age eighteen and included a goal that that continuing education be made available to illiterate adults.

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We Don't Need No Thought Control
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¶4. (C) Beyond these few practical points, however, an analysis of the stalled bill provides an insight into the radical intellectuals of the MAS hardline. The bill conceives of education as "de-colonizing, liberating, anti-imperialist, revolutionary, and transformational." (Note: Emboff was once present at a seminar for aspiring teachers in which the government presenter announced to the assembled future teachers that the most dangerous thing they would face in their schoolrooms was neoliberalism. He made no mention of rising drug use rates, domestic violence, widespread poverty, or inadequate schoolrooms and supplies, only citing neoliberalism--a concept most of his listeners would have been hard-pressed to define. End note.)

¶5. (C) The bill would require that students who speak an indigenous language as their mother tongue be taught in that indigenous language, with Spanish lessons added later in their matriculation. The bill also would require that students with Spanish as their mother tongue also study an indigenous language. The bill rejects "all types of dogmas" while also promoting "the beliefs and the spirituality of the indigenous nations", a seemingly contradictory proposal. Scientific and technical courses would also be linked to the "cosmivision of the peoples." Foreign languages could be taught as a third language (in addition to Spanish and an indigenous language), but the educational community would select the foreign language "taking into account practical criteria and international relations."

¶6. (C) The new bill would also broaden community participation to "consolidate the plurinational educational system with the direct participation of social organizations, unions, popular organizations, towns, indigenous nations, and afro-Bolivians in the formulation of policies, plans, organization, schedules, programs and evaluation of the educational process." The bill predicts that this expansive participation will "eliminate all types of aggression between the actors in the educational system."

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All In All, It's Just Another Brick in the Wall
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¶7. (C) The proposed bill continues, for thirty-six pages, mixing utopian high-hopes and revolutionary jargon. Assistance from the government would be provided to "potentialize the technical and ideological-cultural capacity of the system"; a promise unlikely to relieve the

average rural teacher who has inadequate supplies, an decrepit school, and hungry students. Much like the MAS draft constitution, this bill is a dense, weakly-worded thicket of compound sentences and undeliverable promises. Unlike the draft MAS constitution, however, this bill is mostly dead, keeping the "de-colonization" of Bolivia out of the schools...but leaving it in the draft constitution. In any event, the new Minister of Education Roberto Aguilar has promised to "advance the process of educational revolution until it is completed."

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